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May 1, 1953

R - Mr. Armstrong

ARA - Mr. Cabot

Request for flash intelligence study

ARA has within the last two months had a number of discussions with [illegible] of the Governments of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras concerning the Guatemalan situation and the threat which these Governments believe it presents to their own stability and sovereignty. El Salvador has submitted a request to purchase arms from the United States; Nicaragua had made such a request earlier.

On April 9 ARA addressed a letter to the Department of Defense requesting that all three of these Central American countries be brought in under the military aid program of the MSA. A reply has not yet been received.

Beforemaking a final decision to provide arms to these countries, ARA urgently desires an Intelligence opinion as to the probable net effect of such action upon the position of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala. Specifically:

1) Would awareness of the overt procurement of arms from the US by El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras tend to effectively convince the Guatemalan Army that the Arbenz regime was damaging its interests and leading the country into an unprofitable situation?

or

2) Would it tend to increase the Army's loyalty to Arbenz?

or

3) Would the Government be able to capitalize on Guatemalan patriotism to such an extent that its increased popularity would outweigh any misgivings the Army might entertain?

4) Would knowledge that the US was providing arms to Guatemala's neighbors tend to increase or diminish the Guatemalan Communists' external subversive activities?

It is hoped that the recent work on the Guatemalan problem done in connection with NIE-84 may make the production of such an estimate less onerous than it would ordinarily be. As our need is immediate, I shall sincerely appreciate anything you can do to provide us with an answer to these questions within as short a time as possible.

ARA:KKenny/ed

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